In a new series of interviews, Bob Childs asks brass band luminaries questions about

playing and other aspects of their banding experiences. First to be featured is trombone

virtuoso, Brett Baker, widely considered to be one of the leading exponents of the

trombone in UK banding, and in addition to being a renowned soloist, he is President of

the British Trombone Society (BTS), principal trombone of Black Dyke Band, Artist and

Clinician for Michael Rath Brass Instruments and Chairman of the International Trombone

Association Awards Committee (ITA).

It’s a privilege for me to begin this new series of Stars in Brass with one of the most talented and

busiest soloists in the movement. I caught up with Brett on the day after he helped Black Dyke

secure the Yorkshire Regional Championships at St. George’s Hall in Bradford.

**Bob: Hi Brett, How did it feel winning the contest and what did you do to celebrate?**

Brett: I was absolutely overjoyed with the band’s success and I was especially pleased

for the new members at Black Dyke. My celebrations included drinks with the band

and late-night chat with friends from Woodfalls Band.

**Bob: Who was your biggest influence as a young trombonist?**

Brett: No question, they were Robert Morgan at Lydbrook Band and Lyndon Baglin, who was

the conductor of the band at the time. Lyndon showed me the correct way to practice and

always led by example, while Robert was very supportive, often taking me to concerts and

solo competitions.

Bob: Do you ever wish you’d chosen the orchestral path rather than staying in brass bands?

Brett: Well, I did embark on a career change in 2000 when I enrolled at the Royal Northern

College of Music (RNCM) to study trombone. My intention was to do a postgraduate diploma and

then make a living from professional trombone playing. However, as luck had it, this coincided

with my appointment at Black Dyke and, frankly, trying to fulfil Black Dyke’s busy schedule

combined with a bit of conducting and solo work was more than enough to make a full-time

living from music.

**Bob: Who was your trombone idol when you were a child?**

Brett: When I was young it was Christian Lindberg and Steve Walkley, but these days it’s Joseph Alessi. I also have a great deal of respect for Peter Moore; he has such a good attitude.

**Bob: Do you concur with me that most trombonists play behind the beat and, if so, why?**

Brett: Yes, I would agree that they do, generally speaking, play behind the beat! Maybe it’s because they sit so far away from the euphoniums and baritones (because of the length of their slides), it could be a distance thing. The other contributing factor is that most players move their slides too slowly and this forces them to delay the production of the note.

**Bob: When do you think you’ll retire from Black Dyke?**

Brett: Well, initially I thought I’d only last three years, but I’ve now been solo trombone at

‘Dyke’ for 12 years, but Frank Berry was in the seat for 18 years and Ken Dennison played solo

trombone at Fairey for 19 years. It would be nice to beat their records and complete 20 years, but

I guess it’s not entirely up to me!

**Bob: How many slide positions are there on a trombone?**

Brett: Most people think the answer is 7.

However, if I’m talking to student trombonists I’d say 14. In actual fact there are many, many more

than that. The number is infinite!

**Bob: Do you have any advice for a budding young trombone player?**

Brett: Be patient and take as many performance opportunities as possible.

**Bob: What’s the best thing about playing in brass bands?**

Brett: The international camaraderie. Wherever my travels take me I always find like-minded

bandsmen and women who are as passionate about bands as me.

**Bob: Do you have anything especially exciting on the horizon?**

Brett: Yes, in a few months time I’ll be launching my new website called The World of the

Trombone, which will include all things to do with the instrument, including historical aspects

and downloadable archive material.

Bob: Thanks Brett, as always it’s been a real pleasure chatting to you and I wish you well in

the future.